

Lincoln County schools use Campaign for Character

Situation:

Lincoln County School District No. 1 (LCSD#1) sought to reduce social aggression and bullying. A task force to develop strategies was comprised of parents from all three schools, the district special education director, the high school building principal, the Department of Family Services representative, and the Lincoln County University of Wyoming Extension educator. The educator developed and administered a survey to all students, staff members, and parents in the district. The data identified the following as critical:

- Lack of basic moral compass of youth in the district
- Staff members did not understand bullying behavior and were at times exhibiting bullying behavior
- The same students being excluded and repeatedly harassed

A Campaign for Character conference was developed for teachers. Several speakers offered strategies to create safe and positive schools. The first day was devoted to Character Counts training. UW Extension was

responsible for this section of training. Character Counts uses six pillars of character to teach youth to make sound moral judgments: trustworthiness, respect, fairness, responsibility, caring, and citizenship. The district had already been utilizing Quantum Learning, which uses a research-based educational methodology to create a positive school culture. It has eight keys to excellence: integrity, failure leads to success, speak with good purpose, this is it!, commitment, ownership, flexibility, and balance.

District barriers to using Character Counts included it was already using Quantum Learning and adding Character Counts would be difficult for staff members, the cost of the Character Counts curriculum, and the motivation of teachers to participate long term in the Character Counts program.

Lincoln County UW Extension received a grant from the Rocky Mountain Power Foundation to provide each teacher a tote of all necessary supplies and lesson plans. Lincoln County School District No. 1 purchased supplies, such as banners and posters for the building.

Impact:

Building Leadership Team (BLT) members met with LCSD#1 representatives to review progress toward creating positive school environments. The building principals listed the following progress from attending the Campaign for Character Conference.

Kemmerer Elementary School – The PTA printed Character Counts Pillars on all new KES shirts. PTA members raised money to purchase a set of seven Character Counts posters for each classroom. All teachers use the Character Counts program and the resources provided at the conference.

Kemmerer Middle School – The district purchased each teacher the Middle School Character Counts curriculum. Teachers use the eight keys and find the two programs (Character Counts and Quantum Learning eight keys) complement each other. All seventh and eighth graders attended the “Rachel’s Challenge” assembly, which showed the changes each youth can have with small acts of kindness toward each other. Ten KMS students attended additional training to implement the concept into the schools. KMS has the pillars posters hanging in the halls.

Kemmerer High School – Hosted the “Rachel’s Challenge” assembly. One-third of all students attended additional training to implement the concept into the schools. KHS has the pillars posters hanging in the halls. Some teachers are teaching monthly lessons on character. Each student has started a gratitude journal to help him or her reflect on character decisions. The principal reported a positive difference in the atmosphere of the high school since initiating character programs.

Kemmerer Alternative School – Integrated Character Counts, the six pillars, and the eight keys to success. Teachers use character programs daily, and they stated it directly affects choices they see students make.

Kemmerer Recreation Center – The facility has pillars posters in its lobby and uses the youth sports curriculum and coach’s training in all sports programs.

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